

From: Charles Meins
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/24/02 8:49am
Subject: Microsoft settlement

Dear Sirs;

I am very unhappy with the proposed Microsoft settlement. It will in no way break the stranglehold that this company exerts on the information technology market, a stranglehold which extends from the first piece of information loaded in the computer at bootup (the "boot sector") to last image on the screen at shutdown.

Given the competitive nature of the computer hardware market, I find it implausible that no major vendor has attempted to differentiate themselves from the pack by offering a unique feature such as this: the pre-installation of Linux along with Windows on their computers. A "boot manager" (software which has been widely available for many years) would allow users to choose which operating system to load when they start their computers. This would involve very little added cost to the vendor while offering the consumer a painless way of trying out an alternative operating system which has received considerable popular press. The fact that no major vendor has made such an offer is prima facie evidence of the control exerted by Microsoft by means of the software pre-load agreements it dictates to hardware vendors.

I would propose therefore an alternative settlement: mandate that Microsoft provide other operating systems in addition to their own in a boot manager arrangement. There are a wide variety of operating systems that could be used. Some, such as Linux, are available without direct cost to Microsoft. Others, such as OS/2, would involve financial negotiations with third parties. (There are many other mature and powerful operating systems, e.g., Solaris, BeOS, AmigaOS, and NextStep, whose financial restrictions are unfamiliar to me.)

Microsoft has been able to exert undue influence on the software industry through it's control of the boot sector. Breaking this control would be a simple and effective method to bring competition back into this vital sector of our economy.

Sincerely,

Dr. Charles Meins, Jr.

